

## GROWING ROSES FROM SEEDS

by Albert Ford

(adapted from the May-June 1987 MRS Newsletter)

This is not a note on hybridizing, but rather an invitation to join in the fun of growing roses from seeds. Seeds are available from your own roses in the fall. If you are impatient, one of the hybridizers who is a members of the Society may provide some seeds, and now seeds can be purchased from nurseries. Thompson & Morgan's catalogue, for example, offers *Rosa glauca*. The address is Thompson & Morgan Inc., P.O.Box 1308, Jackson New Jersey, 08527-0308.

Fall is a good to begin seed propagation. If so you will be able to use seed from your own roses. As part of conditioning our roses for winter, the debris resulting from cutting canes back to 3 to 4 feet contains orange, red, or green rose hips. These hips formed as a result of the fertilization of the rose by insects or action of the wind bringing pollen from the anthers to the stigmas. If the wind is your friend, the fertilization will probably be "self", or same variety, if an insect; it may have brought pollen from another variety, in which case a "cross" may have occurred.



In any event, pick a few of the hips that give evidence of maturity by having changed color to red or orange. These hips should be shelled to remove the seeds that are very hard nodule-like parts, white or cream-white in color. You will find they number from one or two, as in **The Fairy**, to over twenty in **Orangeade** for example.

The seeds then should be placed in a solution of water and a small amount of a fungicide like Phaltan. A styrofoam cup, or equivalent, is suitable for this purpose. The best seeds will sink; the hollow or immature seeds will float. Discard the "floaters" and remove the "sinkers" with the aid of a plastic spoon and place on a paper napkin. Generally it helps to pour the mixture into a second cup slowly to hold back the seeds. Spooning the seeds is made much easier.

The seeds may be planted inside in seed trays immediately or you may wish to place them in the refrigerator for more convenient planting. Some prefer to refrigerate (Stratify) the seeds anyway. If you do stratify, do so for 60 to 90 days at the normal setting for your refrigerator.

When you plant the seeds, place them in a bottom-holed seed tray that will accommodate 1 1/2 to 2 inches of growing medium. The medium should be light and resist packing. Fertilmix or Pro-Mix, or equivalent, are good and are obtainable from your garden supply center. Space your seeds in moist medium 1 inch apart about 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep. Rows should be about 1 1/2 inches apart. Seeds will mature in darkness or light.

Water by sprinkling when the surface appears dry; about every other day at normal home winter humidity. Do not over water to the extent that there is a constant runoff.

Seedlings will appear in about 6 to 8 weeks. Some may appear as early as 14 days after planting and some much later than 8 weeks, and unfortunately, some seeds will never produce seedlings.

The first evidence of visible growth will be two small leaves that are called cotyledons. These are growth leaves and not true rose leaves that will follow in very short order. When the first rose leaves appear, the seedling should be transplanted to a small pot (4 inch) of potting soil to which a small amount of rose fertilizer has been added. The fertilizer can be 5-8-5, 10-10-10, processed to a fine-grain form applied at a rate of 1/2 teaspoon per 4-inch container. Place the transplanted seedlings on a sunlit windowsill, preferably to the east or south of the house or they may be placed under a growing light (GE, Sylvania) at about 6 inches from the light source.

In the spring (May in this area) the seedlings may be taken outdoors to an area protected from spring winds and direct sunlight. After "hardening" them thusly, they may be planted in your garden and thereafter treated like any other rose.

Flowering may occur indoors or may not occur until taken out of doors. The first flower may be like its seed parent or something else altogether. That's the fun and excitement. If it is unlike its parent, probably it resulted from a cross and you will have helped a brand new variety into existence. You can name it, register and patent it.

For assistance in this exciting venture contact Al Ford or any of the other members with experience in this area. You may want to do more reading on the subject too. Ortho's All About Roses, obtainable at your garden center, is a good place to start.

As with any facet of rose culture, different opinions prevail. Such is the case with growing roses from seeds. If you have had experience in this area and would like to share it with other members, drop a line to the Editor of the NewsLetter.

(Al Ford, March 1, 1987)